

# UNH Collaborates with U Maine, Orono on Ground Breaking “Telematic” Performance

One play, two casts, two stages, two states.

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*RACHELE NELSON IN ESTRANGED. PHOTO BY DUANE SHIMMEL.*

On November 20, the University of New Hampshire Department of Theatre and Dance and the University of Maine Intermedia MFA Program will premiere "eSTRANGED," a telematic performance based on Albert Camus's novel *The Stranger*. The play will be performed simultaneously in both Durham, NH, and Orono, ME, using video simulcast and other technologies.

"eSTRANGED" explores aspects of existentialism in the 21st century as human beings find themselves split into their physical and digital selves. UNH's David Kaye and U Maine Orono's NB Aldrich '81 devised this joint production to be performed simultaneously from each campus, hundreds of miles apart. Using video simulcast and social technology, actors from both universities will perform in one, multi-media production. The play runs November 20-24 in the UNH Hennessy Theatre in Durham, NH, and the APPE blackbox in the IMRC in Stuart Hall, Orono, ME. This production contains strong language, sexual references and violence and is not recommended for children.

## Q & A with David Kaye, co-writer/co-director

### How did the idea for eSTRANGED come about?

**DK:** Nate [NB Aldrich, co-writer/co-director] and I had discussed collaborating on a project for several years. We talked about many very different ideas, but we both became interested in the possibility of a telematic performance. However, we wanted to create something where the inter-media and technological nature of this style of performance would be at the heart of the project, not something laid on. We wanted the telematic format itself to be the very best way to explore the subject we chose. This eventually led us to ponder the sometimes disconnected and alienating effects technology can have on the human psyche. Discussions about alienation eventually led us to the existentialists, and then to Camus's novel. About this time Nate had come across the essay "Postscript on the Societies of Control" by the contemporary French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze. This provided us with a sharper vision of how we might be able to take a 21st century look at *The Stranger* and use the nature of the telematic performance as the spring board for this exploration.

### Why the collaboration?

**DK:** I began working with Nate in 1997 when he was our department's theatre technician, before he headed out to complete his MFA in electronic music. He has an incredibly sharp intellect that he combines with a powerfully creative mind. He created the soundscape for my productions of "De Donde," "Julius Caesar" and "The Memorandum." Theatre is, by its nature, the ultimate collaborative artistic medium. Having a chance to reconnect and create a work collaboratively with an artist that I deeply respect is an opportunity I would not want to miss.

Rehearsals have been very interesting, because they too are done telematically. So computers, projectors and screens are set up at each rehearsal as the creative teams

here at UNH and at UMO are linked by the same live-feed technology we will use in the performance. This is an entirely new rehearsal experience. We are all fully emerged in the

collaborative process as this team of actors, designers and directors, working from two different locations, come together to create a single piece of art.

### What will the technical logistics/challenges be?

**DK:** We have been working on the technological component for several months. Specific software has been acquired and we had to learn how to utilize it. Some technological components had to be invented to make happen what we wanted to happen. It is quite a challenge. This is where the opportunity to collaborate with the Intermedia MFA students, and with the new Innovative Media Research and Center at UMO is so exciting. It offers our undergraduate students the chance to work with students, faculty and technology that we don't presently have here at UNH.

### Anything you want to say about the source material, *The Stranger*?

**DK:** This piece will be like nothing we have ever presented at UNH. It is a deconstruction of the Camus novel, but also uses his other works, specifically "The Myth of Sisyphus" as the lift off point for many of the questions we are posing. The play will not be so much an answer to those questions as an artistic response. Camus, as with many of our great philosophers, posed multiple questions that led them to construct theories about the nature of our existence. These arguments were, in the case of Camus, a response to the 20th century world he lived in. We will attempt to ask some of these same questions, framed within the context of our existence as, what Deleuze termed, "dividuals." That is to say, a life now lived as both a physical being, and a media created and manipulated virtual being. Virtual beings that have the potential to continue after the physical being disintegrates. These are dynamics that the great minds of the 20th century could not even imagine. Only a handful of telematic performances have taken place worldwide. All of us--the entire creative ensemble from two institutions, along with the two audiences separated by several hundred miles, will be breaking a lot of new ground.

*"eSTRANGED," runs November 20-23 at 7 p.m. and November 24 at 2 p.m. in the UNH Hennessy Theatre in Durham, and the APPE blackbox in the IMRC in Stuart Hall, Orono, ME. Tickets for the Durham performance are \$8 for youth aged 17 and under, \$14 for UNH students, ID holders and seniors and groups of 15 or more, and \$16 for the general public. They can be purchased through the [PCAC Ticket Office](#) located in the Johnson Theatre lobby of the Paul Creative Arts Center. This full-service ticket office is open Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and one hour before curtain. Tickets purchased online will incur NO ADDITIONAL FEES. Call 603-862-7222 or visit [UNHarts.com](#). This production contains strong language, sexual references and violence and is not recommended for children. For more information about our season, our programs, to book a tour or to make field trip reservations for your school, visit [unh.edu/theatre-dance](#) or call 603-862-2150.*

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